

**Helpful hints for filling out NOAA Grant application forms for
The Estuary Habitat Restoration Program Project Solicitation**
FFO# NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2011-2002885

Background

The information provided below is intended to **supplement**, not replace, the instructions provided in the federal grant application forms and the Federal Funding Opportunity. This information should decrease common errors and confusion when filling out federal grant applications for the Estuary Habitat Restoration Program Project Solicitation. Please call or email Jenni.Wallace@noaa.gov, (301) 713-0174 x183, Julia.Royster@noaa.gov, (301) 713-0174 x 169, or Ellen.M.Cummings@usace.army.mil, (202) 761-4750, if you have any questions.

Important Information Regarding Proposal Submission

Please register with Grants.gov as soon as possible. This is a one-time, multi-step process that may take several weeks. Instructions are available at www.grants.gov under “For Applicants” and “Get Registered” and at http://grants.gov/assets/Organization_Steps_Complete_Registration.pdf. Please pay special attention to step 4, as we’ve noticed many applicants miss that step.

You must download a compatible version of Adobe Reader to successfully navigate the Grants.gov pages and complete your application on Grants.gov; you can download the program and application before the registration process is complete.

If, due to technical difficulties, you are not able to submit through Grants.gov, please print your Grants.gov application and attachments, sign the forms (even where it says ‘will be completed upon submission’), and submit them by the post-mark deadline.

If you are submitting through Grants.gov, do not wait until after your local post office or delivery service has closed on the due date to submit your online application.

In the event Grants.gov is experiencing technical difficulties, you may need to submit a paper copy of the application and the deadline for submission cannot be extended for you even under such circumstances.

Please remember there is always the possibility for human or computer error during the Grants.gov submission process.

Receipt of reply messages from Grants.gov verifying acceptance or rejection of your application can take up to 48 hours.

Application Content and Form Guidance

Applications submitted through the Grants.gov website should include a maximum of six (6) files in addition to the Federal application forms:

- 1) Project summary and narrative;
- 2) Budget justification;
- 3) Justification and associated budget if project is being considered innovative;
- 4) Monitoring plan;
- 5) Design plans, if available; and

6) Supplemental Information - all other attachments combined into one, indexed file, such as maps, resumes, and project support letters, including landowner or land manager documentation

PDF files are the preferred format. Information about converting documents to PDF files is available on the grants.gov website under “Download Software” under “Applicant Resources.”

Form SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance

- Make sure this form reflects the full dollar value requested and match proposed.
- Start dates are the first of the month, and end dates are the last day of the month.
- When asked for your project title, please choose a short, descriptive name including a location, if possible. *Do not* use a generic name such as “Estuary Restoration Act Project.”
- This form asks for two contacts within your organization. The “person to be contacted on matters involving this application” is a project manager or primary investigator. The document is signed and submitted by the Authorized Representative. This should be the person designated as Authorized Organization Representative in Grants.gov by your organizations’ E-business Point of Contact during the registration process. The Authorized Representative will receive official communications concerning your application.

Form SF-424A- Budget Information of Non-construction Programs

- It is particularly important to include an accurate and thorough budget. A complete budget consists of the SF-424A and a budget narrative for the project.
- The following link provides [Budget Guidelines](http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/pdf/budgetguidelines.pdf) for filling out the SF-424A form (<http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/pdf/budgetguidelines.pdf>).
- This form is critical to proposal reviews; as such please ensure it is filled out thoroughly.
- Use column 1 for ERA request, column 2 for other federal funds and column 3 for non-federal match. Please enter whole dollar amounts on this form.

Budget Narrative

- All applications must have a detailed budget narrative explaining and justifying the ERA, federal, and the non-federal expenditures by object class, see below for 424A object classes.
- The budget narrative must accurately describe the budget breakdown of Section B (Budget Category) of the SF-424A form. For clarification and simplicity, it is best to discuss each expense by object class in the order they appear on the SF424A. Indicate whether or not expenditures are ERA, other federal, or non-federal in nature. Include the dollar amounts in the discussion and how the dollar amounts were derived.
- A spreadsheet with ERA, other federal, and matching expenditures can also be included but is not required.
- Matching funds must be available and used during the stated project period and cannot be used to match other awards.
- The following are highlights from the Budget Guidelines (see above) to help you formulate your budget narrative. It is important to distinguish between ERA, federal, and non-federal funds when developing your budget table and associated narrative.
Object Class:
 - a. Personnel: include salary, wage (\$/hr), and hours or % of time committed to project of each person by job title
 - b. Fringe Benefits: should be identified for each individual position. Describe in detail if the rate is greater than 35 % of the associated salary.

- c. Travel: all travel costs must be listed here. Provide a detailed breakdown of travel costs for trips over \$5,000 or 5 % of award. Include destination, duration, type of transportation, estimated cost, number of travelers, lodging, mileage rate and estimated number of miles, and per diem.
- d. Equipment: equipment is any single piece of non-expendable, tangible personal property that costs \$5,000 or more per unit and that has a useful life of more than one year (i.e. truck, copy machine). For purchases of this magnitude, please include a cost vs. lease analysis. For example, a truck costs \$20,000 and we need a truck for 56 days. It will cost \$100/day to rent. Therefore, it is better to rent the truck for \$5,600 rather than purchase the truck for \$20,000.
- e. Supply: can be any supplies needed for the restoration or administration work associated with the project. A detailed explanation is required for total supply costs over \$5,000 or 5% of the award. Purchases less than \$5,000 per item are considered by the federal government as a supply.
- f. Contractual: list each contract or subgrant as a separate item. Provide a detailed cost breakdown and describe products/services to be obtained by the contractor. Contingency costs are not allowed.
- g. Construction: only charge construction costs for construction of buildings (i.e. green house, educational center). All other project related construction costs should be contractual labor.
- h. Other: list items, cost, and justification for each expense. Include 20% of total project costs for potential Corps project management.
- i. Total direct charges
- j. Indirect charges: In order to claim indirect charges on line (j), a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) must already be established. Applicants will be limited to the amount of indirect costs stated in the FFO, but amounts in excess can be used as match. A copy of the indirect cost agreement should be included in your application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award. If no agreement has been arranged, indirect costs can be incorporated into other line items (i.e. fringe benefits, other) as long as they are justified in the budget narrative and meet all OMB prescribed cost principles.
- k. Totals of direct and indirect charges

Example Budget Narrative

Personnel (Total Federal Share) - \$33,750

All staff will be paid prevailing wages.

ERA: Total: \$18,750

John Doe, project manager, will provide 750 hours of work at \$25/hr for overall project management, supervision, and reporting.

Other federal Total: \$15,000

Alice Doe, biologist, will provide 750 hours of work at \$20/hr for technical support, field work, and pre and post project monitoring.

Personnel (Non-Federal Share) - none

Fringe Benefits (Federal Share) - \$5,063

ERA: \$2,250

Other federal: Total: \$2,813

The fringe benefit rate is 15% of salary. \$2,813 covers benefits for John Doe and \$2,250 for Alice Doe. Fringe benefits go toward FICA, medical and dental insurance, retirement and disability.

Fringe Benefits (Non-Federal Share) - none

Travel (Federal) - \$1,000

ERA: Total \$500

Other federal: Total \$500

Travel funding will be required for the project manager and biologist to travel to and from the Thompson Brook site to conduct field work and supervise construction activities. Mileage expenses will be charged at \$0.50/mile and total mileage (20 round trips) for the project is estimated to be 2000 miles. Total: \$1,000.

Travel (Non- Federal) - none

Equipment (Federal) - \$7,000

ERA: Total \$3,000

Other federal: Total \$4,000

A portion of the cost of a hydroseeder is requested. The total purchase price of this equipment, used, is \$20,000, but this cost is split between several sources of funds. The cost to rent this equipment at \$800/week for this project will be approximately \$8,000. We are requesting \$7,000 towards the purchase of this equipment, which will continue to be used for habitat restoration after the completion of this project. This purchase represents a savings over estimated rental costs and will allow for long-term use for future restoration activities.

Equipment (Non-Federal) - \$13,000

The remaining cost of the hydroseeder (see above) will be covered by other non-Federal sources of funds.

Supplies (Federal) - \$ 32,500

ERA: Total: \$25,000

Native plants/trees will be purchased to revegetate the riparian area around the project site. A breakdown of the number, sizes, and costs is attached.

Other federal: Total \$7,500

Purchase and use of expendable field supplies including – stream flow gauges, maps, sampling equipment, and health and safety equipment. Total \$5,000

A laptop computer will be purchased to record monitoring data in the field prior to and after completion of the project. Data will be recorded and analyzed using the laptop computer. Total: \$2,500

Supplies (Non-Federal) - \$3,000

The applicant will purchase \$3,000 in software for the lap-top computer to collect and analyze data. Total: \$3,000

Contractual (Federal) - \$6,000,000

ERA: Total \$3,500,000

Other federal: Total \$2,500,000

Contractors (breakout work descriptions by anticipated contracts between ERA and other federal, as appropriate) will be hired to carry out construction activities associated with habitat restoration including funds for the project engineer, heavy equipment rental, heavy equipment operators, and project materials. The attached cost estimate, based on the 70% design plan, includes personnel hours and costs by task. The contractor has certified that all iron, steel, and manufactured goods used on the projects will be made in the United States. All personnel hired under contract will be paid prevailing wages in keeping with the project locality.

Contractual (Non-Federal) - \$113,000

The County will purchase a bottom-less arch culvert to be installed at the project site. Total \$105,000

The County will provide management and redirection of traffic flow. Total: \$8,000

Other (Federal) - none

Other (Non-Federal) - none

Indirect Charges (Federal) - \$8,554

ERA: Total \$8,554

Other federal: Total \$0

The county has an approved indirect cost rate of 20% of applicable direct charges, which excludes contractual costs. 10% of the applicable Federal direct charges are requested and the remaining 10% will be applied as non-Federal match. The total applicable direct charges are \$85,543 and 10% of that is \$8,554. This represents 0.14% of total direct charges. Total: \$8,554

Indirect Charges (Non-Federal) - \$34,354

The county is applying the remaining unrecovered indirect costs (10% of the applicable Federal direct charges) as match (see above). Total \$8,554

The county will also cover the full 20% of the applicable non-Federal direct charges. Total: \$25,800

Total Direct Charges: **ERA**
 Other federal: \$6,079,313
 Non-Federal: \$116,000

Total Indirect Charges: **ERA**
 Other federal: \$8,554
 Non-Federal: \$34,354

Total Charges: **ERA**
 Other federal: \$6,087,867
 Non-Federal: \$15,354

Developing Innovative Project Costs

If an applicant feels their project could be considered innovative, they should develop two budgets - one considering it innovative and one considering it as a standard project (which may receive a 65% Federal match). Innovative projects may receive 85% Federal funding for the incremental cost of the use of innovative technology. This means that the estimated cost of achieving similar results not using the innovative approach or technology must be provided.

For example -Project A using innovative technology costs \$110,000. To achieve the same or similar results not using the innovative technique or approach would cost \$90,000. The incremental cost is \$20,000. The maximum Federal share of the project cost using innovative technology would be:

Standard project cost Federal share: $90,000 \times .65 = 58,500$

Extra costs of innovation Federal share: $20,000 \times .85 = 17,000$

Total maximum federal share = 75,500

NOT – $110,000 \times .85 = 93,500$

Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for Estuary Habitat Restoration Program funding may be implemented in accordance with a cost share agreement with the Corps; or a cooperative agreement with the Corps or NOAA, subject to availability of funds. If a Corps cost share agreement is required, funds will not be transferred to the applicant. Instead, the Corps will use the funds to implement (construct) some portion of the proposed project as well as cover its management responsibilities.

If the project meets the Corps' conditions for implementation under a cooperative agreement, or if NOAA funds a project, funds will be transferred to the applicant under a cooperative agreement. If **the Corps** funds the project using either a cost share agreement or a cooperative agreement it ***will retain a portion of the Federal funds necessary to cover its expenses.*** ***Applicants*** should ***discuss proposed projects with the appropriate Corps District to ensure that these costs are considered when preparing the project budget.*** Applicants are advised to plan for **20% of their project cost** (not their ERA request) to be for project management by the Corps. This amount should be included under the "Other" (object class) in the budget section. Please call or email Jenni.Wallace@noaa.gov, (301) 713-0174 x183, Julia.Royster@noaa.gov, (301) 713-0174 x 169, or Ellen.M.Cummings@usace.army.mil, (202) 761-4750, if you have any questions.

Application Checklist for the Estuary Habitat Restoration Program Solicitation

Federal forms:

- _____ Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)
- _____ Budget Information for Non-construction Programs: SF-424A
- _____ Assurances for Non-construction Programs: SF-424B
- _____ Certification Regarding Lobbying: CD-511
- _____ Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)SF-424

Proposal Overview based on Evaluation Criteria

Section I: Project Summary 2 pages (see FFO page 9 for full list)

- _____ Name and link to Federal or State restoration plan the project will address
- _____ Be consistent with the Estuary Habitat Restoration Strategy
- _____ Clear Project Goals and Objectives
- _____ List specific species and their status that will benefit from the project
- _____ List specific habitat types and acreage to benefit; long-term “success metrics
- _____ Description of Innovative technique (if applicable)
- _____ Project Timeline (Proposal submission to monitoring completion)
- _____ Description and status of compliance activities (e.g., NEPA)

Section II: Project Narrative 15 pages (see FFO pages 9-10 for full list)

- _____ Description of how regional habitat trends, watershed activities, and/or priority/special management areas were considered in developing the project proposal
- _____ Description of expected ecosystem benefits, their significance/importance, when the benefits will be realized, and the project’s expected lifetime
- _____ Description of the roles, contributions, and coordination among project partners
- _____ Description of how the long-term operation and maintenance of the project will be handled
- _____ Examples of restoration “success” with proposed methods
- _____ Define how the project addresses species/habitat vulnerability to climate change

Section III: Budget Narrative 4 pages (see FFO pages 10-12 for full list)

- _____ Budget Table with 3 columns (ERA, other federal, non-federal)
- _____ Detailed budget broken out by SF-424A object classes (Section III Budget Narrative)

Section IV Justification for innovative project 2 pages (see FFO page 12)

- _____ Justification for an innovative project. If project could be considered innovative, develop two budgets – one considering it innovative and one considering it as a standard project.

Section V: Monitoring Plan 4 pages (see FFO page 12)

- _____ Monitoring plan specifying at least one structural and one functional parameter to be measured and that monitoring will occur for five years post-construction

Section VI: Supplemental Information (max 20 pages)

- _____ Map showing the project site and key features
- _____ Project design plans, if applicable
- _____ Brief resumes of key staff, no more than 5 individuals
- _____ Letter of assurance stating adequate authority, personnel, funding, and local cooperation to conduct and maintain the project. This includes letters of financial or in-kind support.
- _____ Documentation of title, easement, or other written permission from the private landowner or public land manager for use, including long-term operation and maintenance of the land required for the project